THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) Since 1984, State Government had a plan to relocate outside the sanctuary area the inhabitants of five hamlets, namely Pithakia, Bahanigadia, Dholkoth, Nuakua, and Bahantasahi, situated inside Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary. The State Government has reported that so far only 62 families of Bahantasahi and 23 families of Dholkoth have been resettled at Krushanagar and Tulsidelpur resettlement sites.

(b) to (d) Though 400 houses have been constructed under the Indira Awas Yojna to rehabilitate the affected families, the response to shift has been lukewarm because of non allotment of land to these families. The rehabilitation scheme has been revised to address the difficulties faced during the rehabilitation.

Against the estimated compensation of Rs. 1.0343 crores for acquisition of land for rehabilitation an amount of Rs. 69.26 lakhs has been made available to the district authorities. Of this Rs. 58.63 lakhs have been disbursed to the villagers. The balance amount to be paid as compensation will have to be worked out after taking into account the interest payable till the date on which payment is actually made.

Illegal Cutting of Forests

†1374.SHRI DEVI PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether illegal cutting in forest areas and criminal activities of the Mafia gangs connected with it have increased in States like Bihar;

(b) if so, the steps being taken to toughen security of natural resources like forests;

(c) whether the recent murder of a forest officer in Rohtas District of Bihar and the alleged assualt by Police on 13 tribal women in Raipur District of Chhattisgarh are associated with corruption, crime and irregularities, prevailing in the forest areas; and

(d) if so, whether Government would conduct an inquiry into these incidents?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) and (b) There is no report with the Central Government

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

that illegal cutting in forest areas and criminal activities of the Mafia gangs connected with it have increased in States like Bihar. The Forest Survey of India, in its report "State of Forests 1999", has reported a marginal decline in forest cover of only 2 sq.km since 1997 in the State of Bihar. This may be the result of a combination of factors, chiefly the biotic pressure on the forests. However, cases of illegal felling of trees are detected and action is taken by the State Government concerned under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and other relevant Acts and rules for the time being in force. In order to further consolidate the forest protection efforts, the Central Government has requested the State Governments to involve the local forest dwellers and people living in nearby villages in the protection, conservation and regeneration of forests, through the guidelines on Joint Forest Management issued to the State Government in February 2000 for protecting the forests through involvement of local people. The State Governments have also been requested by the Central Government to strengthen their forest protection machinery in order to deal with organised crime like smuggling and poaching in forest areas.

(c) and (d) Preliminary enquiry into the recent brutal killing of Mr. Sanjay Kumar, Divisional Forest Officer, Shahabad, Rohtas District indicates that the killing of Shri Sanjay Kumar was probably the handiwork of the local minning mafia. Regarding the Chhattisgarh case, there is no report with this Ministry regarding the alleged assault by police on 13 tribal women in Raipur District of Chhattisgarh. The report received from the State Government of Chhatisgarh is negative with regard to the incident involving thirteen tribal women.

Environment data

1375.SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Government's environment data five years old" appearing in the Times of India dated 8th February, 2002;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to upgrade the environment data to prepare a road map to fight pollution; and

(d) the steps proposed to address to problems mentioned in the news-item?